

Campaigning in the Press

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Historical Background

A big part of convincing voters to support an amendment for equal suffrage was a press campaign. Newspapers reached a great number of people. In each state campaign for suffrage, there was a press chair or publicity chair to advertise upcoming events and write editorials in support of the amendment. One was Edith Medbery Fitch who worked on the campaign in 1910. She and her husband ran the *Herald* newspaper in Hurley so she knew how to write well and get her editorials printed around the state.

In two campaigns, the state suffrage campaign had a newspaper of their own. In 1898, Della Robinson King of Scotland, S.D. edited the *South Dakota Messenger* for the S.D. Equal Suffrage Association. In 1913, Ruth B. Hipple of Pierre started another *Messenger* and edited it for the 1914 campaign of the S.D. Universal Franchise League (S.D.U.F.L.). Supporters like Marguerite Sahr of Pierre and attorney Lydia B. Johnson of Fort Pierre also wrote columns for Hipple's *Messenger*. Also in 1914, the editor of the *Rapid City Journal*, Alice B. Gossage compiled news of the suffrage campaign in western South Dakota and printed a special issue of her newspaper about all their work. The issue came out in late October, just before the election.

In the fall of 1918, the S.D.U.F.L. struggled to hold speeches and meetings because the influenza epidemic meant people could not gather in large groups. Spreading the message for the suffrage amendment through newspapers became even more important. The S.D.U.F.L. mailed out requests for support to every newspaper in the state. To supportive editors, they sent around "plate material," which were metal plates that were pre-engraved with a graphic and text about the amendment—saving the printers from setting each individual letter.



Della Robinson King,
From her book: *Thoughts
of a Thoughtful Woman*
(1897).

Alice Gossage &
the Women's
West of the River
Suffrage Number,
*Rapid City Daily
Journal* (SD),
October 26, 1914.



Your Turn!

1. Design and write your own newspaper front page about equal suffrage, voting, or about a contemporary political issue you care about. What headlines will you use? What images?
2. Research a contemporary political issue and write a newspaper editorial about the issue. Editorials express the author's opinion on a subject and often try to persuade the newspaper's readers to agree with their point of view. **Optional:** Have a trusted adult review your editorial, and then, you can submit it to a local or school newspaper. Note, not all submitted editorials are chosen for printing.